

Dear HSS Framework editors, California State Board of Education (SBE) and History–Social Science Subject Matter Committee of the Instructional Quality Commission.

Here I send a set of suggested corrections to the California state history and social science framework, in response to the call for comments published at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/hssfw2ndreview.asp>

They are all about chapter 11, which deals with my area of professional expertise namely the history of indigenous cultures of Mesoamerica and North America.

I hope you will find the comments useful.

Best wishes,
Magnus Pharaos Hansen

Chapter 11.

Pages 278-282:

General Comments:

Instead of using the terms about "Maya civilization", "Aztec civilization" or "Inca Civilization" it may be more correct to use a broad concept of "Mesoamerican Civilization" encompassing "Olmec culture", "Maya culture" and "Aztec culture", and "Andean civilization" encompassing "Chavin culture" and "Inca culture". This arbitrary delimitation of "civilizations" based on ethnolinguistic and political groupings masks larger connections and relations within the cultural regions in which they participate.

Page 280: Lines 978-980

Currently has "the Maya city-states built larger and grander buildings, developed advanced writing, mathematics and astronomy, and had a more hierarchical and wealthy society."

Suggested change: "the Maya city-states as well as the city+states of other contemporary cultures in Mesoamerica built larger and grander buildings, developed advanced writing, mathematics and astronomy, and had a more hierarchical and wealthy society"

Reason: The city-states and cultural level of the Maya in the classical period was not higher than that of neighboring cultures in the same period such as the Zapotec, Mixtec, Teotihuacan or Totonac.

Page 280, Lines 982-985

Current text: "Maya societies produced monumental architecture, astronomic observatories, a pictographic writing system that yielded libraries of thousands of books, and a sophisticated calendar system based on a fifty-two-year cycle."

Suggested change: "Maya societies produced monumental architecture, astronomic observatories, a phonetic writing system that yielded libraries of thousands of books, and a sophisticated calendar system based on a fifty-two-year cycle."

Reason: Maya writing was not pictographic. What makes the Maya script stand out among the writing traditions of Mesoamerica is that it is *not* pictographic (Aztec and Zapotec writing is arguably pictographic), but instead actually represents the phonetic values of spoken language.

Page 280, Lines 985-986

Current text: "These innovations would have given the Maya society strong cultural power, because many neighboring people would have been impressed."

Suggested change: "strike this sentence".

Reason: The innovations mentioned were not specific to the Maya, but with the exception of phonetic writing were shared by all the neighboring cultures, such as Zapotec, Mixtec, Teotihuacan, Gulf cultures etc. The Mayas neighbors therefore had no reason to be impressed. Furthermore, the Maya do not seem to have extended their political domain over other cultures in the area - whereas Teotihuacans political power did in fact reach into the Maya area - through military intervention, not domination through cultural innovation. There is simply no basis to claim that Mayas dominated culturally based on cultural innovation - because the Maya did not innovate independently (except for phonetic writing), and did not dominate other cultures in the area.

Page 281 Lines 997-999

Current text: "After about 750 CE, warfare intensified among city-states, monumental construction diminished, and cities were gradually abandoned. Deforestation, erosion, and drought may have contributed to their decline."

Suggested changes: "After about 750 CE, the Maya area experience a period of intensified warfare among city-states, monumental construction diminished, and many Maya cities were abandoned while new ones emerged as new centers of power. Deforestation, erosion, and drought may have contributed to the period of turmoil."

Reason: The current text perpetuates the erroneous idea that Maya civilization declined or disappeared at the end of the classical period. Today mayanists reject this idea, noting that the center of Maya civilization simply moved from the center of the Maya are to the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula and to the southern highlands. There were still dozens of powerful independent Maya city states, with monumental architecture and hieroglyphic writing when the Spaniards arrived.

Page 282, Lines 1037-1039

Current text: "In contrast to the Aztecs, the Incas did not have a writing system, but they used Andean *quipus*, or sets of colored and knotted strings, to keep complex records."

Suggested change: "In contrast to the Maya, the Incas did not have a writing system, but they used Andean *kipus*, or sets of colored and knotted strings, to keep complex records."

Reason: The Aztecs did not have a phonetic writing system as the Maya had, and while some specialists that Aztec pictographic writing was an actual writing system this claim is not fully accepted. Also the preferred spelling now generally is *kipu* as in the Quechua language official orthography and not *quipu* as in the traditional Spanish spelling.

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